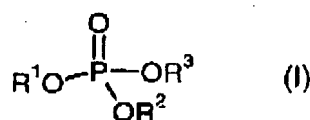


Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the separation of dichlorobenzene mixtures containing m- and p-dichlorobenzene by extractive rectification wherein:

(i) the mixture is ~~as an extracting agent~~ contacted either with [[a]] one phosphoric ester of the general formula (I) as an extracting agent



~~in which wherein~~ R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and represent an are selected from the group consisting of aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkenyl radical and wherein R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3C-atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphoric esters (I) or is contacted with [[a]] one phosphine oxide of the general formula (II) as an extracting agent



in which R¹, R² and R³ are identical or different and ~~represent an~~ are selected from the group consisting of aliphatic or cycloaliphatic alkyl or alkylene radical or hydrogen, and wherein R¹, R² and R³ together contain at least 3 C-atoms and not more than 12 C-atoms, or a mixture of different phosphine oxides of formula (II) or a mixture of said phosphoric esters of formula (I) and phosphine oxides of formula (II), and subsequently

(ii) the components of the mixture are separated into a ~~m-dichlorobenzene-m-dichlorobenzene-~~ and a ~~p-dichlorobenzene-p-dichlorobenzene-~~ containing fraction, and finally

(iii) the extracting agent is separated from one of the fractions obtained.

2. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein the formula (I) or (II) for the extracting agent, R^1 , R^2 and R^3 are identical or different and represent a radical selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, n-butyl, tert-butyl, n-pentyl, and sec-butyl.

3. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein the extracting agent is triethyl phosphate, tripropylphosphine oxide, or tributylphosphine oxide alone or as a mixture.

4. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein the separation is carried out in a rectification column, wherein pressure at the top of the column is in the range of 5 to 100 hPa and pressure difference between the bottom of the column and the top of the column being 0 to 100 hPa and optionally the number of theoretical plates being 20 to 200.

5. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 4, wherein the pressure at the top of the column is 5 to 30 hPa and the pressure difference between the bottom of the column and the top of the column is 0 to 20 hPa and optionally the number of theoretical plates is 60 to 120.

6. (Previously Presented) Process according to any of Claim 1, wherein a weight ratio of mass flow of reflux to distillate is 1:1 to 20:1.

7. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein a weight ratio of mass flow of feed of the extracting agent to feed of the m-dichlorobenzene and p-dichlorobenzene mixture is 2:1 to 40:1.

8. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein the separation of m- and p-dichlorobenzene and the separation of the extracting agent is carried out in a rectification column, with a side-stream column being connected to the rectification column via a vapor side-stream take-off for recovery of the extracting agent.

9. (Previously Presented) Process according to Claim 1, wherein a melt crystallization of the m- dichlorobenzene or p-dichlorobenzene, is provided downstream of the extractive rectification.